

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS YEREVAN 002367

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR EUR/CACEN FOR SIDEREAS, EUR/ACE FOR LONGI

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ECON](#) [ETRD](#) [PREL](#) [RS](#) [AM](#)

SUBJECT: RUSSIA OPENS BORDERS TO CAUCASUS

Ref: YEREVAN 2216

1. (U) This cable is sensitive but unclassified. Please protect accordingly.

BORDER OPEN AGAIN

2. (SBU) On Friday October 22, the Russian government reopened the border checkpoint Verkhniy Lars that had been closed September 15, following the Beslan School shootings in North Ossetia. (Note: Russian MFA confirmed the border opening. End Note.) The closure had put the squeeze of Armenian companies importing goods from Russia, raising transport costs by as much as 30 percent and stalling rows of cargo-laden trucks at the border. The government of Armenia had raised the issues on many levels with the Russian government to no avail.

KOCHARIAN'S CALL TO PUTIN -- COINCIDENCE?

3. (SBU) President Kocharian's official website claims that he initiated a call to Russia's President Putin the same day the border opened, October 22, to discuss the "development and strengthening of Bilateral issues." A source from the Russian MFA who was familiar with the Kocharian-Putin telephone conversation said that the October 22 opening was "pure coincidence and should not be understood to have been brought about by Kocharian's call." The coincidental nature of Kocharian's intervention was underscored by press reports which state that Russia has re-opened its land borders with Azerbaijan as well.

COMMENT

4. (SBU) The temporary closure of Russia's land border with Georgia was a strong reminder to Armenia of its dependence on transit through Georgia and Russia's northern Caucasus, underscoring Armenia's relatively weak bargaining power in the region.

5. (U) This cable was coordinated with Embassy Moscow.
EVANS